

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY ACCRA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6899

C O N F I D E N T I A L ACCRA 1758

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PGOV, GH

SUBJ: JOE APPIAH GETS NEW APPOINTMENT

1. PRESS REPORTS THAT JOE APPIAH, GHANA'S ROVING AMBASSADOR, HAS BEEN APPOINTED COMMISSIONER AND SPECIAL ADVISER TO CHIEF OF STATE ACHEAMPONG.

2. COMMENT: APPIAH IS ONE OF THE OLD WAR-HORSES OF GHANAIAN POLITICS AND IS SAID TO WANT TO BE PRIME MINISTER UNDER A UNION GOVT. ORIGINALLY A SUPPORTER OF NKRUMAH AND HIS CONVENTION PEOPLE'S PARTY (CPP), HE BROKE WITH CPP IN 1955 AND JOINED BUSIA'S NATIONAL LIBERATION MOVEMENT. WHEN THIS MERGED WITH OTHER OPPOSITION PARTIES IN 1957 TO BECOME THE UNITED PARTY, APPIAH BECAME MEMBER OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND LATER, IN 1958, DEPUTY LEADER OF THE PARLIAMENTARY OPPOSITION. JAILED BY NKRUMAH FROM 1961-62, HE SUBSEQUENTLY PRACTICED LAW IN KUMASI UNTIL OVERTHROW OF NKRUMAH IN 1966. WHEN CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY OPENED IN 1969, HE BROKE WITH BUSIA'S PROGRESS PARTY AND IN MAY 1969 ANNOUNCED FORMATION OF HIS OWN NATIONALIST PARTY, WHICH AFTER MERGER WITH OTHER SPLINTER GROUPS BECAME UNITED NATIONALIST PARTY (UNP). IN AUG. 1969 ELECTIONS, UNP WON ONLY TWO SEATS IN NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AND APPIAH HIMSELF WAS BADLY DEFEATED IN CONTEST FOR A SEAT IN HIS HOME AREA OF KUMASI. FOLLOWING MERGER WITH OTHER OPPOSITION PARTIES, APPIAH BECAME CHAIRMAN OF JUSTICE PARTY WHEN IT WAS FORMED IN 1970. AFTER ACHEAMPONG'S 1972 COUP,
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APPIAH BECAME A ROVING AMBASSADOR FOR NATIONAL REDEMPTION COUNCIL, WORKING FOR HIS BODY DIRECTLY AND NOT FOR MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS. IN THIS CAPACITY, HE HAS TRAVELED EXTENSIVELY AND UNDERTAKEN SPECIAL ASSIGNMENTS (E.G., MEMBER OF GHANA'S TEAM FOR 1973 NEGOTIATIONS WITH UNION CARBIDE; HEAD OF SPECIAL COMMITTEE SET UP IN 1976 TO INVESTIGATE FINANCES OF R.T. BRISCOE CO.; AND MEMBER OF AD HOC COMMITTEE ON UNION GOVT.)

3. OPPONENTS HAVE LONG SUSPECTED APPIAH OF OPPORTUNISM AND PUBLICITY SEEKING. SMALL IN STATURE, RESTLESS, LIVELY AND VAIN, HE IS VERY AMBITIOUS BUT HAS NEVER REACHED REAL POLITICAL HEIGHTS. AN ASHANTI, HE HAS STRONG TIES IN THAT REGION SINCE HIS SISTER, VICTORIA, IS THE WIFE OF THE ASANTEHENE. WE DO NOT THINK THIS PROMOTION TO COMMISSIONER AND SPECIAL ADVISER IS PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT IN ITSELF, BUT IT DOES SHOW APPIAH IS STILL IN GOOD STANDING WITH ACHEAMPONG AND IS A MAN TO WATCH WHEN AND IF A UNION GOVT APPEARS HERE.

4. WE WISH TO CALL DEPT'S ATTENTION TO USIS' FEB. 23, 1977 OM TO CU/AF, WHICH OUTLINES PLANS OF APPIAH'S WIFE, PEGGY APPIAH (DAUGHTER OF THE LATE SIR STAFFORD CRIPPS, UK CHANCELLOR OF EX-CHEQUER AFTER WWII), TO VISIT US THIS FALL IN CONNECTION WITH SURVEY EXHIBITION OF GHANAIAAN ART CO-SPONSORED BY NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS AND UCLA. AS NOTED IN OM, WE BELIEVE IT WOULD BE ADVANTAGEOUS TO US INTERESTS IF USG COULD FACILITATE A SUCCESSFUL FIRST VISIT FOR MRS. APPIAH.
SMITH

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